

# **IN STATU NASCENDI**

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**Special Issue:  
The Work of Haruki Murakami**

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*In statu nascendi* (Latin)

In the process of creation, emerging, becoming



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# EDITORIAL

When I decided on the idea of a special issue on the work of Haruki Murakami, I could never have imagined the huge positive response that it has received. It is my privilege to introduce volume 5.1 of *In Statu Nascendi* which has been made possible by the generosity of the contributors whom I truly thank for their time and support. For anyone who has read the secondary literature on Murakami, many of the names on the contents page will be familiar, and once again I thank these authors for choosing to publish their work with us. I believe, however, that all of the papers in this special issue will be of great interest to Murakami scholars around the world; it is perhaps testament to Murakami's immense appeal that so many excellent papers have found their way here. And for those readers unfamiliar with Murakami, I hope that you will be inspired to research further and engage critically with his work. Also, of course, to pick up his books and allow them to take you, at least for a little while, into a *Murakami-world*.

Clearly, research on Murakami continues to grow and spaces to share ideas, such as this project, will continue to emerge. I predict that work with Murakami will continue down different paths; that is, away from traditional literary approaches. In a truly global sense, readers have found a *depth* to Murakami's fiction; a depth which gathers strong curiosity and diverse engagement. Whether it is sociological, psychoanalytical, mythological, political, or so forth, individuals are motivated to extend Murakami's texts: to think and work with them long after their initial reading.

The reason I decided on the work of a Japanese literary writer as the topic of a philosophy journal is because I believe that the depth to Murakami's stories is philosophically important and that this *extension* itself is a philosophic activity. The *philosophic* in Murakami's work is ready to be uncovered, communicated, and developed; it has no original language and is not limited to any one academic field. Therefore, it is hoped that this special issue on Haruki Murakami will explore the *depths* of his works from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to present novel involvement and arguments to the growing research community.

We begin **Part I** of the special issue with **Jonathan Dil's** "Oh My Kamisama! God in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki." Dil masterfully examines the role of divinity in Murakami's work from a Jungian standpoint; the paper examines the existential importance of Murakami protagonists discovering an 'inner God' as against a cold and distant 'outer God'; finally, Dil

connects Murakami to ‘postsecular fiction.’ This is an essential paper on Murakami which *In Statu Nascendi* are proud to publish. Following this, we are honoured to present **Tomoki Wakatsuki** and **Matthew C. Strecher’s** “Rebels With a Cause: A Cosmopolitan Examination of Haruki Murakami and Kazuo Ishiguro.” Wakatsuki and Strecher explore ‘cosmopolitanism’ in Murakami’s work through a comparison with the Japanese-born, British novelist Kazuo Ishiguro; drawing on the personal experiences of the two authors, Wakatsuki and Strecher maintain that it is their ‘memory’ that connects them to cosmopolitanism, as well their commitment to issues such as identity and belonging. Rather than postsecular fiction or world literature, Wakatsuki and Strecher relate Murakami to ‘global literature.’ **Megumi Yama** also puts forward a Jungian perspective in “Haruki Murakami, Novel as a Method: ‘Memory’ and his Creative Process.” Yama’s work examines the creative process of Murakami by offering insightful biographical information; additionally, it links with the preceding work through the concept of ‘memory’; Yama considers not only Murakami’s particular, historical memory, but also introduces the notion of a ‘collective memory.’ It is argued that Murakami’s stories resonate with the psyche or soul of his global readers. **Ype De Boer’s** “Ethics of a Split Existence: Murakami’s *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* as a Poetico-Philosophical Experiment” embodies the objectives of this special issue as it puts forward a convincing and sustained philosophic approach to the work of Haruki Murakami. De Boer considers the experience of a ‘split existence’ in Murakami’s fiction; further, Murakami’s texts are understood as ‘poetico-philosophical experiments’ in which the mode of existence (the *ethos*) of the writer and reader is called into question; De Boer skilfully articulates the existential responses to such a split in one’s identity and world; it is maintained that Murakami protagonists tend to embrace the ‘split’ in their existence; therefore, De Boer presents a genuinely new and important reading of the novel. Next we have **Amber A. Logan’s** “Haruki Murakami’s Non-Traditional Portrayals of Shadows and Doppelgangers” which also examines *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* as well as offering a Jungian perspective. Logan explores why Murakami’s shadows and doppelgangers are frequently portrayed positively; it is argued that Murakami’s ‘unconventional’ shadows may be due to Japanese cultural differences that are lost in translation or are to be approached as ‘idiosyncratic symbols’ which are interpreted on an individual basis by readers. **Gemma Scammell’s** “The Cityscape and Haruki Murakami’s Despondent Characters: the use of magical realism in the creation of heterotopic space” is an excellent interdisciplinary paper which draws on literary studies as well as the work of Foucault. Scammell considers

‘space’ in Murakami’s fiction as centrally related to society and power; it is asserted that Murakami characters seek ‘other’ spaces in order to escape a dependency caused by their hollow, late-capitalist lifestyles. ‘Space’ is connected to a recurring theme in Murakami’s work: maintaining one’s identity. In my own paper (**Joseph Thomas Milburn**), “Haruki Murakami and Carl Gustav Jung: A Post-Jungian Perspective,” I examine various Jungian-influenced interpretations of Murakami, such as Strecher’s and Yama’s previous works; I argue that the ‘other’ or ‘metaphysical’ worlds in Murakami’s fiction are to be understood as fundamentally related to *this* world and to relations with other (‘real’) people. I maintain that Jung and Murakami are frequently drawn together because of their metaphorical attitude towards existence. Further, a post-Jungian perspective is offered which considers the terms ‘Self,’ ‘Psyche,’ and ‘Dasein.’ In the final paper of Part I, we have **Chikako Nihei**’s “Time for Spaghetti in Haruki Murakami’s Fiction: What Cooking Time Means in a Consumerist Society” which is appearing for the first time in the English language. Nihei examines an often-overlooked aspect of Murakami’s work: the protagonists’ laidback lifestyle and preoccupation with spending time cooking good food. Like Scammell’s paper, Nihei applies the interpretation to capitalist society as well as gender roles. Importantly, it is noted that the lifestyle of Murakami protagonists may be difficult for many readers to achieve.

**Matthew C. Strecher**’s “Seeking the Living Among the Dead: The Other World of Haruki Murakami” starts off **Part II** of the special issue. It is particularly valuable as it outlines Strecher’s extensive work on the ‘Other World’; further, the paper explores the function and development of this central aspect of Murakami’s fiction. **Olaf Schiedges** also presents his illuminating work on Murakami in “A spatial approach to the fictional world of Murakami Haruki” which focuses on the significance of space, particularly spatial opposition, and the crossing of boundaries (physical or metaphorical): be it personal (identity), socio-historical, intertextual, or cultural. There are connections to be made with Scammell’s paper here, and, arguably, productive comparisons with Strecher’s essential findings. **Karen Connie M. Abalos-Orendain**’s “Layered Frameworks: Thoughts on Japanese-ness and the Cosmopolitanism of Haruki Murakami” provides more illuminating ideas on the cosmopolitan in Murakami’s fiction as well as an examination of its relation to ‘pure’ Japanese literature; a musical metaphor is put forward, ‘*basso ostinato*,’ to argue that there is something essentially ‘Japanese’ about Murakami’s work. The next part of the special issue includes author introductions to their recent publications on Murakami. **Jonathan Dil** introduces *Haruki Murakami and the*

*Search for Self-Therapy: Stories from the Second Basement* (2022) and **Masaki Mori** introduces *Haruki Murakami and his Early Work: The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Running Artist* (2021); I am sure readers will appreciate the overviews provided of their key works. Additionally, an interview with **Gitte Marianne Hansen**, co-editor of *Murakami Haruki and Our Years of Pilgrimage* (2022), reveals insight into Hansen’s past and present research as well as personal engagement with the work of Murakami. **Midori Tanaka Atkins** provides an in-depth, scholarly review of Murakami’s most recent novel, *Killing Commendatore* (2017/2018) in “*Killing Commendatore* Book Review: From *Boku* to *Watashi*, Healing on Canvas and in the Darkness of the Pit” which also considers classical Japanese literature and the importance of first-person pronouns, including, for instance, reference to Murakami’s recent short-story collection *First Person Singular* (2020/2021). **Ken Lawrence**, author of *The Murakami Pilgrimage: A Guide to the Real-Life Places of Haruki Murakami’s Fiction* (2016), provides a highly readable reflective piece on his personal involvement with Murakami in “Murakami Pilgrimage Reflections: How Murakami’s Fiction Makes the Mundane Magical” which I am sure readers will enjoy. Finally, **Eric Siercks** has graciously introduced the newly opened Haruki Murakami library, also called the Waseda International House of Literature, at Waseda University, Tokyo. “Just Like Breathing: Celebrating the Opening of the Haruki Murakami Library” includes further information about the design of the building and recent research activities. I expect many of you will be eager to visit the Haruki Murakami library and, if you do, please look out for a copy of this special issue!

Last, and by no means least, I would like to thank **Piotr Pietrzak**, the Editor-in-Chief of *In Statu Nascendi*, who has tirelessly worked on this project in its final stages and who gave me the opportunity to start it in the first place. Here’s to the next one!

We hope that you enjoy this special issue,

**Joseph Thomas Milburn**  
Guest Editor, *In Statu Nascendi*

PART I:  
WORKS



Jonathan Dil

## Oh My Kamisama! God in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki

***Abstract:** Though Murakami Haruki is an on-the-record atheist, references to God appear in his fiction from time to time. This God, however, is usually cold and distant and seemingly unrelated to the forces of destiny guiding the central protagonist's journey. Prominent examples of this cold, distant God are found in the short story "all god's children can dance" (1999) and in the novel 1Q84 (2009-2010). Yet seen from a Jungian perspective, it can be argued that the forces of destiny guiding each of Murakami's protagonists is simply God by another name, particularly if we accept Jung's claim that "God is an archetype." This essay argues that a Jungian conception of God is a vital framework for understanding the forces of destiny operating in Murakami's fiction, and it uses the short stories "all god's children can dance" and "Cream" (2019) and the novel 1Q84 as prominent examples. In each of these stories, a protagonist's discovery of an "inner God" is an antidote to a cold, distant, or judgmental "outer God" that is tormenting the protagonist in some way. This "inner God" is Murakami's answer to the crisis of meaning and the rise of religious fundamentalism in contemporary society, issues that for him crystallized in the wake of the Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack of 1995. Murakami's conception of an inner God as an antidote to an outer God also connects him with trends in what John McClure has labelled postsecular fiction.*

### Introduction

Murakami Haruki is an on-the-record atheist, though this is not necessarily something you will pick up from reading his fiction alone, which is full of the strange and the mysterious, and where even God gets a mention from time to time. This is why Murakami is always careful to distinguish between his personal beliefs and the ideas found in his fiction. Talking to Laura Miller and Don George for the website Salon, for example, Murakami explained:

I write weird stories. I don't know why I like weirdness so much. Myself, I'm a very realistic person. I don't trust anything New Age—or reincarnation, dreams, Tarot, horoscopes. I don't trust anything like that at all. I wake up at 6 in the morning and go to bed at 10, jogging every day and swimming, eating healthy food. I'm very realistic. But when I write, I write weird. That's very strange. When I'm getting more and more serious, I'm getting more and more weird. When I want to write about the reality of society and the world, it gets weird. Many people ask me why, and I can't answer that. (Miller and George 1997)

This contrast between Murakami the health-conscious realist and Murakami the weird-writing fantasist is an important part of his public persona and reassures readers that the man behind the strange stories they love is grounded in mundane reality as they (perhaps) are. At the same time, these stories are there to offer readers a break from reality—a suspension of disbelief and entry into an imaginative world where anything is possible. And one of the possibilities the atheist Murakami offers his readers in these fictional spaces is God, or more precisely, two Gods—an inner God and an outer one—that tend to appear in his fiction together and play off one another. Murakami’s fictional loyalties lie with the inner God—God as something like a Jungian archetype which is always just beyond our conscious awareness, but which is still there shaping and directing our lives in significant ways. What his fiction also suggests is that this inner God can fill the God-shaped hole left by the outer God, not necessarily because this outer God is not there, but because, like an absentee father, He is cold, distant, and disengaged from the meaningful details of our lives. The emergence of these two Gods in Murakami’s fiction is one example of his ongoing engagement since 1995 (the year of Aum Shinrikyō’s coordinated sarin gas attack on three lines of the Tokyo subway system) with questions of religion, spirituality, and meaning in contemporary Japanese society and the world at large.

This essay begins with a brief survey of statements Murakami has made about his personal beliefs, looking at both his atheism and his openness to what he has described as a parallel reality running alongside the more mundane reality we normally inhabit. It then examines two of Murakami’s short stories and one of his novels where examples of this “God without” and “God within” can be found: “all god’s children can dance” (1999), *1Q84* (2009–2010), and “Cream” (2018). The essay concludes by considering the applicability of the postsecular label to Murakami’s fiction, a term which has gained some attention in approaches to spirituality in contemporary Western literature, but which is still largely absent from similar approaches in Japan.

### **Murakami’s Personal Beliefs**

In 2005, I interviewed Murakami in Boston, and as I was questioning him about the influence of Carl Jung on his writing and thinking, the conversation turned to his own beliefs (or lack thereof) regarding religion and the supernatural. The relevant part of this conversation is below:

**Jonathan Dil:** Are there any things in particular about Jung that you have trouble with, where you see a big difference between his approach and your approach?



**Murakami Haruki:** One thing is, when I'm writing, I believe in supernatural things, or synchronicity, or those things, but when I'm not writing, I don't believe in anything. I'm a very practical man. But he's not. He's totally attracted. When I'm writing, I go to the other side and come back; but when I'm not writing, I'm just here.

**JD:** So when you're in this world, you don't believe in anything—God, religion, the supernatural?

**MH:** No, not at all. My grandfather was a Buddhist priest, and my father was a teacher and priest, but I'm not. I believe in some kind of atmosphere of Buddhism because my father and my grandfather believed in that respected religion, so I grew up in that atmosphere. I'm not a Buddhist in the religious sense, but that atmosphere might be important to me. But I don't think of religion much.

**JD:** Do you believe in life after death?

**MH:** No. We are born from nothing and when we die, we return to nothing. That's my belief.

Murakami's grandfather, Murakami Benshiki, was the head priest at Anyōji Temple in Kyoto until the age of seventy, when he was struck by a train during a typhoon and killed. Murakami's father, Murakami Chiaki, was a school-teacher in Nishinomiya City (near Kobe) but also worked part-time as a Buddhist priest. Murakami has described his father as the possessor of a "sincere faith" and one of his strongest childhood memories is of his father's daily morning ritual of reciting Buddhist sutras in front of a statue of a Bodhisattva kept within a cylindrical glass case in the family home. Once, as a boy, Murakami asked his father why he performed this ritual, and his father explained that he was praying for those who had died in the war, both ally and enemy alike (Murakami 2019). Despite this early home environment, however, Murakami does not believe in nor practice Buddhism himself, nor any other religion. There are times when Murakami will identify as a Buddhist out of convenience. In his travelogue *Uten enten* (Come Rain or Shine), for example, he describes a trip he made to several monasteries in Greece where he ate and stayed overnight. This experience gave him several opportunities to talk to monks and pilgrims, and in these conversations, he would sometimes be asked about his religious beliefs. In these moments, Murakami found it more convenient to describe himself as a Buddhist rather than as an Atheist. At the same time, he emphasizes for his readers that he is embarrassed to say he does not know much about Buddhism, nor about religion in general (Murakami 2016, locs. 230, 502, and 594).

Murakami belongs to the roughly 70–80% of Japanese today who describe themselves as without religion (*musubukyo*) (Shimada 2009, loc. 133;

Roemer 2009, 307).<sup>1</sup> As Shimada Hiromi points out, this label is more about explicit and exclusive religious belonging and identity than it is about the presence or absence of religious ritual in such people's lives (Ibid., loc. 184). Many Japanese who describe themselves as *mushūkyō* will (like Murakami) also describe themselves as Buddhists or Shintoists on occasion, and many will participate in religious rituals, such as visiting shrines and temples, where they will pray and give offerings. Much of this activity, of course, may be more customary and cultural than it is religious (if this distinction is even meaningful), but the fact remains that these religious practices remain alive and relevant for many Japanese. At the same time, Murakami is clearly not alone in leaving behind the specific religious tradition of his father and grandfather. In terms of formal, institutional religious identity, Japan is one of the most secularized countries in the world.

Shimada suggests that for much of the postwar period, most Japanese who described themselves as *mushūkyō* were apologetically so, seeing religion in general as a positive thing, and he suggests that many, in fact, were slightly embarrassed by their lack of a strong and clear religious identity (Ibid., loc. 98). He also argues that events like the Aum attack and the rise of religious fundamentalism more generally have started to change this attitude to some degree (Ibid., p. 301). Considering that strong religious faith at times leads to acts of violence, why would it not be a good thing to hold one's faith less exclusively and with less certainty? The discussion which follows about Murakami's inner and outer Gods is best seen in this context of shifting Japanese attitudes towards questions of religious faith, practice, and belonging in recent years.

Though Murakami's early fiction makes little mention of God or religion, this began to change after 1995. The general attitude to God (or gods) and religion in this fiction is generally skeptical: religion is, at best, a fiction that allows people to cope with life's uncertainties; at worst, it is a divisive factor that leads to tribalism. In Murakami's 2002 novel, *Kafka on the Shore* (*Umibe no kafuka*), for example, a mysterious character called Colonel Sanders, who explains that he is neither a God nor a Buddha, downplays the concept of God in postwar Japan in this way:

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1 Shimada references several surveys that show that about 70% or more of Japanese identify with the *mushūkyō* label, but he also notes that this number went as high as 80% in the aftermath of the Aum attack (13). Roemer presents data from the Japanese General Social Surveys (JGSS) and reports that for those sampled between 2000 and 2003, 66.96% of respondents said they had no religion, 22.8% said they had a household faith that they did not actively practice, and 10.21% said they had a personal belief in a particular religion.

Listen—God only exists in people’s minds. Especially in Japan, God’s always been kind of a flexible concept. Look at what happened after the war. Douglas MacArthur ordered the divine emperor to quit being God, and he did, making a speech saying he was just an ordinary person. So after 1946 he wasn’t God anymore. That’s what Japanese gods are like—they can be tweaked and adjusted. Some American chomping on a cheap pipe gives the order and presto change-o—God’s no longer God. A very postmodern kind of thing. If you think God’s there, He is. If you don’t, He isn’t. And if that’s what God’s like, I wouldn’t worry about it. (Murakami 2005, p. 265)

In *1Q84*, explored in more detail below, one of the characters, a cram-school teacher called Tengo, ponders the problems of the world and laments the inability of the gods to do anything about it. The narrative offers us this insight into his thoughts:

You could bring all the gods of the world into one place, and still they couldn’t abolish nuclear weapons or eradicate terrorism. They couldn’t end the drought in Africa or bring John Lennon back to life. Far from it—the gods would just break into factions and start fighting among themselves, and the world would probably become even more chaotic than it is now. (Murakami 2011, p. 380)

In the same novel, a cult leader portrays religion as a compensation for those who are unable to face life’s painful realities:

Most people are not looking for provable truths. As you said, truth is often accompanied by intense pain, and almost no one is looking for painful truths. What people need is beautiful, comforting stories that make them feel as if their lives have some meaning. Which is where religion comes from. (Ibid. p. 441)

Such attitudes toward God (or gods) and religion might be described as post-modern tolerance at best, modern skepticism at worst. Yet while religion and God are not normally portrayed in an overly positive light in Murakami’s fiction, the inner quests of individuals to find meaning and significance beyond what secularized societies alone can offer is taken seriously. This is the search for the “inner God” which will be discussed in more detail below.

The one “outside-the-box” idea Murakami has professed a belief in is that of a parallel reality running alongside the more mundane reality we normally inhabit. Speaking to Deborah Treisman in *The New Yorker*, for example, Murakami put the idea this way:

My basic view of the world is that right next to the world we live in, the one we’re all familiar with, is a world we know nothing about, an unfamiliar world that exists concurrently with our own. The structure of that world, and its meaning, can’t be explained in words. But the fact is that it’s there, and sometimes we catch a glimpse of it, just by chance—like when a flash of lightning illuminates our surroundings for an instant. (Treisman 2018)

Another place Murakami has talked about this parallel world is in an interview with the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, where he explained:

I am not religious. I only believe in the power of imagination. And the fact that there isn't only one reality. The real world and another, unreal world exist at the same time; they are strongly connected. Sometimes they overlap, blend. And if I want, if I concentrate a lot, I can cross the border. I can come and go. That is what's happening in my books. That's the point. My stories take place on one side, then the other, and I don't even recognize the difference anymore. (Düker 2014)<sup>2</sup>

In 2019, I again had the opportunity to interview Murakami, and I used the occasion to try and clarify what he meant in the interviews above. At first, Murakami expressed some confusion when I used the phrase “parallel reality” with him (I was speaking to him in English), but he eventually came to suggest that what he was talking about in his interview with Treisman was the idea of synchronicity. He explained:

I believe in synchronicity. It's a kind of parallel reality. It's similar. Because I have experienced those kinds of things from time to time in my life. So they could happen. But I don't believe in any ghosts or anything ... If you don't believe in synchronicity or in a parallel reality you cannot write fiction, I guess. So if you write a novel, there are many synchronicities in that story. You need that. And you have to believe that. So that is my opinion I guess ... Anything could happen. That is what I believe. Anything could happen. So you cannot predict anything at all. I have written a story called “Chance Traveler.” I wrote something like that in that story.

“Chance Traveler” is the story of a gay piano tuner who eventually reconciles with his sister with the help of some uncanny coincidences. He is not sure how to explain these examples of synchronicity in his life, joking that perhaps a god of jazz or a god of gays is behind it all. In the end, the story suggests, it doesn't matter how one explains these mysterious moments in life—they simply happen, and they have the power to bring about personally meaningful outcomes in our lives. The story also opens with the narrator, “Murakami Haruki,” sharing two examples of synchronicity from his own life.

In my 2005 interview with Murakami, he mentioned synchronicity as something he believes in when he is writing but not when he is not writing (and this in the context of his explanation of how he differs from Jung). In my 2019 interview, on the other hand, he was willing to go on the record as a believer in synchronicity, and not just as an idea which supports him when

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2 I have referenced the original interview in German here. I couldn't find the full English translation of the interview online but the quote I am using here is found several places online without a specific source.

he writes. Instead, he acknowledges that he has experienced synchronicity in his life at times. Murakami is clearly wary of being tainted with either the New Age or Jungian brush, and so in interviews he is careful to distance himself from these topics. While usually leaving Jung out of the conversation, however, Murakami has periodically expressed his belief in a parallel reality running alongside our own that manifests in our lives at times as synchronicity, indicating that his belief comes from first-hand experience rather than from any larger religious or metaphysical commitments.

While believing in synchronicity is not necessarily the same thing as believing in God, it is an indication of an openness to something beyond ourselves (at least our conscious selves) that can touch and guide our lives at times. The Japanese Catholic writer Endō Shūsaku, who did believe in God, but who was also a serious student of Jung in his later years, came to view God less as an object than as a force that works in our lives, most often through other people (he came to call this force the *bataraki*) (Endō 2006, locs. 173–176). For Endō, religion was less an idea you believe in (like Marxism say) than a call from the unconscious (Endō 2009, p. 7). While Murakami brings less religious baggage to his explorations of God than Endō did, there are parallels in their commitment to a God of the unconscious (or what I am calling, following Jung, the God within). For Endō, this call from the unconscious led him deeper into his Catholic faith, but also into the deep river of faith and religion more broadly. Murakami keeps his distance from religion, but not from the call of the unconscious, and it is this “religious-free” approach to questions of God and spirituality that makes him potentially a post-secular writer, a topic I will return to at the end of this essay.

### **all god’s children can dance**

The first story in Murakami’s oeuvre to offer a clear treatment of an inner and outer God is his 1999 short story “all god’s children can dance,” which originally appeared in the magazine *Shinchō*, and later in the short story collection *kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru* (all god’s children can dance, 2000). In English, the same collection of stories was published in 2002 as *after the quake*, this title based on the running Japanese title *jishin no ato de* (After the Quake) which was used to introduce the first five stories in the collection when they first appeared in *Shinchō* (the sixth and final story in the collection, “honey pie,” did not appear in *Shinchō*, but was added to the first five stories when they were later published as a book). The English title, *After the Quake*, highlights the fact that all the stories in the collection are set after the Kobe earthquake (also known as the Hanshin-Awaji Daishinsai, which occurred on